

Intimate Partner Violence, Emotional Dependency, And Self-Esteem In Women: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

This article presents a systematic review of the relationship between intimate partner violence, emotional dependence, and self-esteem in women. The study adopts a qualitative approach and follows a systematic review methodology based on the PRISMA protocol (Page et al., 2021), ensuring transparency, rigor, and reproducibility in the selection and analysis of articles. Publications from 2020 to 2024 indexed in databases such as Scielo, Web of Science, and Scopus were included, with an initial total of 1,346 articles identified. After removing duplicates and applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, 13 articles were selected for the final analysis, enabling a detailed evaluation of the available literature on the topic. The study concludes that emotional dependence and low self-esteem are both predictors and consequences of intimate partner violence. The perspective of personal autonomy emerges as the most suitable framework to explain this phenomenon, highlighting the importance of factors such as self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-respect in decision-making and the preservation of a sense of self. Emotional dependence manifests as a deficit in these capacities, increasing victims' vulnerability to the emotional manipulation of the abuser and perpetuating the cycle of violence.

Keywords: Intimate partner violence, gender-based violence, emotional dependence, aggressiveness, self-esteem.

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta una revisión sistemática de la relación entre la violencia de pareja, la dependencia emocional y la autoestima en mujeres. Este estudio adopta un enfoque cualitativo y una metodología de revisión sistemática siguiendo el protocolo PRISMA (Page et al., 2021), que asegura la transparencia, rigurosidad y reproducibilidad en la selección y análisis de los artículos. Se incluyeron publicaciones de entre 2020 y 2024, indexadas en bases de datos como Scielo, Web of Science y Scopus, con un total de 1346 artículos registrados inicialmente. Después de eliminar duplicados y aplicar criterios de inclusión y exclusión, se seleccionaron 13 artículos para el análisis final, lo que permitió realizar una evaluación detallada de la literatura disponible sobre la temática. Se concluye que la dependencia emocional y la baja autoestima son tanto predictores como consecuencias de la violencia de pareja, de esta manera, la perspectiva de la autonomía personal se muestra como la más adecuada para explicar este fenómeno, destacando la importancia de factores como la autoconfianza, la autoeficacia y el auto-respeto en la toma de decisiones y en la preservación del sentido del yo. La dependencia emocional se manifiesta como un déficit en estas capacidades, lo que incrementa la vulnerabilidad de las víctimas a la manipulación emocional del agresor y perpetúa el ciclo de violencia.

Palabras clave: Violencia de pareja, violencia de género, dependencia emocional, agresividad, autoestima.

INTRODUCTION

At an international level, gender violence has become established as one of the problems that generates the greatest burden of disease and serious consequences for the health of women, considered a vulnerable group, which is evidenced by recent statistics provided by UN Women and the WHO that highlight that intimate partner violence, together with family violence, constitutes one of the most damaging structural problems for physical and mental health (de la Villa Moral et al., 2017; Falconi Verona, 2023). In this context, violence is identified as a strong predictor of mental and adaptive disorders, which also affect children or minors within the family nucleus, so its repercussions extend beyond the couple dyad (Díaz Burgos & Ávila Granda, 2024).

In Latin America, 46% of women between 15 and 35 years of age report having suffered some type of violence, predominantly in non-family contexts or outside the domestic group; However, 42% of these

attacks occur in relationships involving a partner, a courtship, a cohabitation, or a cohabitation, which removes them from informal or institutional social support networks, such as the extended family, the nuclear family of origin, and protection agencies, including public security and support organizations (Martínez Bocanegra, 2024; Pérez-Martínez & Rodríguez-Fernández, 2024a). Violence within relationships, being recurrent and sustained, must be analyzed as a multi-causal phenomenon, in which various maintaining factors intervene that require a thorough study to understand its complexity (Mendez Exzacariast et al., 2024).

Various studies indicate affective aspects, such as self-esteem and self-perception, reinforce the perpetuation of patterns of violence, since many women perceive themselves as beings lacking in value, which negatively affects their decision-making and leads them to accept violent dynamics in their relationships (Hilario Ramos et al., 2020). On the other hand, low self-esteem not only influences the maintenance of these relationships, but also generates serious consequences for mental health, affecting the perception of abilities, coping skills and even the ability to project a personal future (Roa Saborit et al., 2024).

However, a cognitive gap is the role of emotional dependence and self-esteem as factors that maintain partner violence. In this regard, emotional dependence is understood as a set of attitudinal, motivational, cognitive and behavioral patterns lead a person to maintain a loving relationship despite the negative consequences (Contreras Cuzcano, 2020). This phenomenon, in addition to involving psychosocial, social and health risks, can be understood as a dysfunctional pattern of thinking distorts the perception of risk and leads to decisions contrary to the interests of women (Tapullima-Mori et al., 2023).

Emotional dependence is characterized by irrational attitudes and ideas, such as feeling of worthlessness without the proximity of a partner or the perception of insignificance outside a relationship, perpetuated due to factors such as a long history of violence, a sentimental education based on machismo or social dynamics that limit female protagonism in roles of independence (Falconi Verona, 2023).

On the other hand, self-esteem, understood as the ability to objectively assess personal skills and strengths, is an essential process for developing a satisfactory life project and maintaining intra and interpersonal skills. Therefore, far from being a static attribute, self-esteem constitutes a dynamic ability that allows people to cope with adverse circumstances (Garrido Antón et al., 2020; Gómez Lamont et al., 2024). However, in contexts of violence, self-esteem can seriously deteriorate, altering the ability to evaluate one's own skills and replacing it with a pessimistic and over-idealized perception of the self (Beraún Vásquez & Poma Rojas, 2020).

Recent studies suggest that low self-esteem is both a factor that maintains partner violence and a direct consequence of it; research also indicates partner violence is associated with predisposing factors, such as emotional dependence and low self-esteem, where aggressor uses violence as a means to reinforce these dysfunctional patterns (Falconi Verona, 2023; Paltán Bonilla, 2019).

Other research indicates that one of the main factors that maintain emotional dependence are social schemes restrict women's autonomy and assign them a passive role of obedience to the male figure (Mendez Exzacariast et al., 2024; Roa Saborit et al., 2024). However, these investigations do not always consider that social actors do not completely determine human behavior; In this sense, the possibility that emotional dependence is a direct or predominant consequence of violent behavior in a couple has also been explored (Chuñe Suclupe et al., 2024).

Thus, personal factors such as upbringing based on violence, authoritarian or aggressive parenting styles, can predispose to significant emotional dependence, even in the face of violent behavior by one of the members of the dyad (Pérez-Martínez & Rodríguez-Fernández, 2024a). Despite this, research on this topic remains limited and presents ambiguities, especially regarding the categories could help to better understand the relationship between emotional dependence and self-esteem as factors that perpetuate partner violence. Therefore, this work aims to carry out a systematic review of the literature to explore this relationship in depth.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach, based on the theory of Domínguez et al. (2019), who argue that qualitative studies allow an understanding of social phenomena through the analysis of non-

numerical data. In addition, the research is of a basic type, according to the guidelines proposed by Meneses et al. (2019). Basic research focuses on expanding knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon without immediate application in practice. In this case, the aim is to generate a solid foundation of knowledge on pedagogical support based on three categories: socio-emotional, technical and attitudinal.

On the other hand, the study design is a systematic review, supported by the work of Latorre (2021), who describes the systematic review as a rigorous methodology that allows to gather, evaluate and synthesize the existing evidence on a specific research question. To carry out this systematic review, we relied on the PRISMA protocol, following the guidelines described by (Page et al., 2021). This structured approach ensured transparency, reproducibility and rigor of the review process.

2.1 Search Strategy and Study Selection

In the present systematic review, rigorous inclusion criteria were used to ensure the relevance and quality of selected studies. Publications carried out between 2020 and 2024 were included, focusing on the topic investigated within the field of social sciences, particularly within the area of Psychology. Therefore, only original articles were considered, which had to be indexed in the Scielo, Web of Science and Scopus databases. In addition, priority was given to ensuring that the studies were available in their entirety to guarantee a complete analysis of their content. Other criteria considered were the relevance of the methodological approach and the contribution to field of study in social sciences, thus ensuring relevance and timeliness of the information collected.

On the other hand, clear exclusion criteria were established to maintain the accuracy and validity of the review. Theses, books and any other type of document was not a scientific article were excluded. Likewise, articles that, despite meeting the selected years and topics, were restricted or not accessible in full text were excluded, since this would limit the possibility of a detailed analysis. Likewise, studies did not present a clear methodology or that did not contribute to the understanding of the problem investigated were rejected.

For the selection of the study population, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established as detailed in Table 1. These criteria, based on Sánchez et al. (2018) and taking into consideration the PRISMA method, ensured the relevance and quality of the studies included in the review.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication period	From 10/01/2020 to 10/01/2024	Publications prior to 2020
Publication status	Published	Under review or not published
Publication types	Open Access	Restricted access
Languages	English, Spanish and Portuguese	Other languages
Document types	Scientific articles	Reports, theses, reviews
Keywords and synonyms	Emotional dependence, self-esteem, intimate partner violence, family violence	Self-worth, aggression, family functionality
Information sources	Emotional dependence, self-esteem, intimate partner violence, family violence	Other sources
Publication stage	Scopus database, Web of Sciencia and search engines such as Scielo	In preliminary stages

The analysis technique for the selected studies was documentary analysis, following the recommendations of Domínguez et al. (2019). This technique allows the data from the selected documents to be examined and interpreted in a systematic and rigorous manner. Thanks to this methodology, a detailed and in-depth understanding of the studies was achieved, facilitating the identification of patterns, trends and recurring themes in the literature reviewed.

2.2 Data analysis

The article selection process began with the identification phase, in which a total of 1346 articles were recorded from three databases: SCIELO (n = 200), SCOPUS (n = 1025) and Web of Science (WOS) (n = 121). Subsequently, 61 duplicate articles were eliminated, leaving a total of 1285 articles. On the other

hand, in the screening phase, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to the articles, which resulted in a reduction to 31 records, excluding 3 additional articles.

In the suitability phase, after eliminating duplicates and applying additional inclusion criteria, 28 articles remained, however, 3 records were filtered after reviewing the abstracts. Finally, in the inclusion phase, 25 articles were identified for the final analysis.

2.3 Sources of information

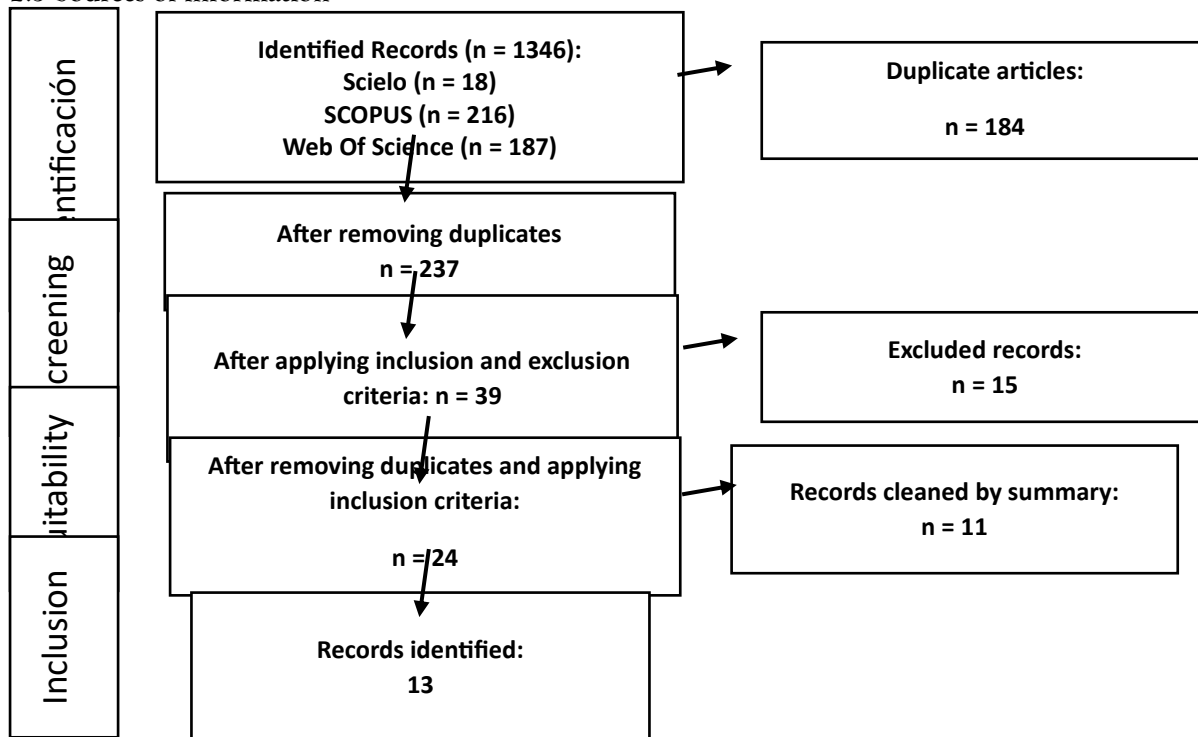


Figure 1. Flowchart for article selection according to PRISMA methodology.

The figure represents the process of selecting articles for a systematic review, organized in four stages: identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion. Initially, 1,346 records were identified from databases such as Scielo (18), SCOPUS (216) and Web of Science (187). After eliminating 184 duplicates, 237 records remained. Subsequently, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied, reducing the total to 39 records, of which 15 were excluded. When reviewing abstracts, 11 more records were discarded, leaving a total of 24. Finally, after an exhaustive analysis, 13 records were included for the final review.

In this way, the following table was obtained:

Table 2. Articles selected for the consolidated analysis unit

Nº	Autors	Methodology	Results
1	(Chafra & Lara, 2021)	Type: Observational, prospective, cross-sectional, analytical, bivariate and relational. Population: 300 women aged 18 to 65. Tools: SPSS for descriptive analysis and correlation (Kendall's tau-b).	They concluded that women who are victims of violence have high levels of emotional dependence, which keeps them in violent relationships, especially due to fear of loneliness and abandonment.
2	(Amor et al., 2022)	Type: Quasi-experimental. Population: 257 women (144 victims and 113 non-victims). Tools: Partner Emotional Dependence Scale (SED) and	They showed that abused women show greater emotional dependence, which is positively related to depression, anxiety and impulsiveness, and negatively related to self-esteem, establishing cut-off points to detect the risk of partner violence.

		statistical analysis of clinical and personality variables.	
3	(Hilario Ramos et al., 2020)	Type: Qualitative descriptive review. Source: 15 scientific articles in databases such as ScienceDirect and SciELO.	They identified that emotional dependence is significantly associated with physical, psychological and sexual violence, the latter being the most prevalent, and many victims consider it part of normal behavior.
4	(De Los Reyes et al., 2022)	Type: Observational cross-sectional study. Population: 469 university students. Tools: Questionnaires on violence in social networks and emotional dependence.	They highlighted that cyber violence is frequent among young couples and is correlated with emotional dependence, low educational levels and multiple partners.
5	(Guerhazi et al., 2024)	Type: Observational cross-sectional study. Population: 120 women victims of violence. Tools: Questionnaires such as the Emotional Abuse Scale and the Emotional Dependence Questionnaire.	They determined that emotional violence is associated with emotional dependence, low self-esteem and alexithymia, highlighting the need for preventive interventions considering the emotional profile of the victims.
6	(Maina et al., 2021)	Type: Qualitative exploratory. English:Source: Life stories of people with parents with addiction problems.	They concluded that problematic substance use in the family environment generates traumatic experiences that affect the emotional life of children.
7	(Mamani-Benito et al., 2023)	Type: Predictive cross-sectional. Population: 180 female entrepreneurs. Tools: Inventories of psychological abuse, emotional dependence, and self-esteem.	They found that low levels of self-esteem and high emotional dependence predict high levels of psychological violence in Peruvian female entrepreneurs.
8	(Denegri et al., 2022)	Type: Causal cross-sectional. Population: 110 married or cohabiting mothers. Analysis: Ordinal logistic regression.	They concluded that gender violence and emotional dependence significantly impact the self-esteem of mothers of students.
9	(Olave et al., 2024)	Type: Non-experimental correlational. Population: 887 university students. Analysis: Mediation models to analyze relationships between variables.	They highlighted that exercise addiction, impulsivity and emotional dependence are linked to partner violence, underlining the need for preventive interventions.
10	(Paiva et al., 2022)	Type: Study based on the traumatic bond theory. Population: 222 women. Tools: Questionnaires on psychological abuse, emotional dependence, and self-esteem.	They confirmed that psychological abuse reduces self-esteem and increases emotional dependence, perpetuating cycles of abusive relationships.
11	(Pope et al., 2021)	Type: Literature review and case studies. Source: Published evidence and clinical observations.	They pointed out that the use of anabolic steroids can induce violent or criminal behavior in some individuals due to biological effects.

12	(Tan et al., 2021)	Type: Qualitative exploratory. Population: 33 GBMSM men with a history of substance use. Method: In-depth interviews and thematic analysis.	They pointed out that the experience of trauma and stigma in GBMSM men motivates sexualized drug use as a coping mechanism.
13	(de la Villa Moral et al., 2017)	Type: Cross-sectional study. Population: 224 young people aged 15 to 26. Tools: Questionnaires on self-esteem, emotional dependence and dating violence.	They concluded that young people victimized in dating show greater emotional dependence and lower self-esteem, with differences according to gender and educational level.

RESULTS

3.1 Family dynamics perspective

The family dynamics perspective seeks to explain the formation and perpetuation of domestic violence from the interaction between family members; in this way, it does not consider emotional dependence and self-esteem as predisposing or maintaining factors but as direct consequences of violent dynamic (Mamani-Benito et al., 2023). Hence, the interactions between family members, who assume established roles both socially and internally, can generate imbalances manifest themselves in dysfunctional communication patterns, inadequate conflict management, and questioning of authority (Amor et al., 2022; Chafla & Lara, 2021).

In this way, in families where violence is normalized, the lack of closeness, displays of affection, and effective communication contribute to perpetuation of these patterns. Therefore, the deficiency in emotional regulation and parental sensitivity is reflected in adolescents, who, when facing conflicts with their peers, resort to violent responses (Maina et al., 2021). This cycle of violence is transmitted intergenerationally, showing in adolescents' similar ways of interacting with their peers as those observed in their caregivers (De Los Reyes et al., 2022).

Emotional dependence, understood as a maladaptive pattern of longing or wanting to be with the loved one, and self-esteem, as an assessment of one's own abilities and skills, can be factors that maintain this dynamic within the couple. Likewise, it is characterized by irrational attitudes and ideas, such as the feeling of worthlessness without proximity of the partner or the perception of insignificance outside a relationship (Paiva et al., 2022). On the other hand, self-esteem should be understood as the ability to objectively judge one's own abilities and skills, in order to improve one's life project and one's intra and interpersonal skills. In this way, violence directly impacts self-esteem, especially when it is recurrent and constant over time, generating a distorted perception of the self and making it difficult to make appropriate decisions.

Based on the above, the perspective of family dynamics is not a categorical tool that allows us to understand in all its complexity how emotional dependence and self-esteem can be factors maintain partner violence. Furthermore, it does not have the function of explaining the level of emotional support family of origin can provide or how these personal and historical conditions can contribute to the maintenance of patterns of family violence. However, some studies indicate that family violence can occur in contexts where roles of power and submission are well defined and are exercised in a fixed and immutable manner, which can lead to the perpetuation of violence (Díaz Burgos & Ávila Granda, 2024; Pérez-Martínez & Rodríguez-Fernández, 2024a; Tapullima-Mori et al., 2023).

Empirically, in violent environments, victims can develop emotional dependence due to the imbalance of power, where family dynamics seem to sufficiently explain this (de la Villa Moral et al., 2017; Olave et al., 2024). Likewise, in families where subjects have experienced that power is exercised through violence, this can be understood in a maladaptive way as a means to maintain order within the family (Hilario Ramos et al., 2020; Pérez-Aranda & Estrada-Carmona, 2024); however, the aggressor finds that

this is most favorable means to make the subject emotionally dependent on him and also decreases his levels of self-esteem, which prevents him from having adequate decision-making.

Violence directly impacts self-esteem, especially when it is recurrent and constant over time, generating a distorted perception of the self and making it difficult to make adequate decisions (Denegri et al., 2022; Mamani-Benito et al., 2023).

3.2 Perspective of emotional dependence

Another category from which the dynamics of violence against a partner, family member or gender have been sought to be understood is the perspective of emotional dependence, which places phenomenon in the excessive need for approval, attention or affection from a significant figure (de la Villa Moral et al., 2017). This need can lead, in the first instance, to a high emotional dependence and a deteriorated self-esteem, which manifests itself in a perception of low personal worth and a tendency to underestimate one's own abilities and attitudes (Beraún Vázquez & Poma Rojas, 2020; Paiva et al., 2022).

In this sense, emotional dependence can be analyzed from an attitudinal, cognitive and motivational dimension, defined by the persistent search for closeness and validation from the loved one; Therefore, from an attitudinal perspective, emotional dependence is reflected in a set of maladaptive behaviors and thoughts that prioritize emotional bond at any cost, even to the detriment of personal well-being (Garrido Antón et al., 2020). This pattern of dependence significantly interferes with decision-making, as it distorts the perception of reality and conditions individual's actions towards remaining in unhealthy relationships (de la Villa Moral et al., 2017). That is, the dependent person develops an external locus of control, linking their self-esteem and self-worth to validation of another person. This imbalance perpetuates a relational dynamic where emotional well-being is subordinated to the actions or reactions of the significant figure, which is particularly harmful in contexts of violence (Chafla & Lara, 2021; Paiva et al., 2022).

Regarding self-esteem, it is conceived as an internal self-evaluation system organizes the perception of one's own capabilities and personal worth. Therefore, when self-esteem is weakened, individuals tend to seek external approval as a compensatory mechanism, linking their self-concept to acceptance or rejection of others (Gonzales Ruiz et al., 2023; Mamani-Benito et al., 2023). This phenomenon is particularly relevant in emotional dependence, where low self-esteem contributes to construction of an unhealthy emotional ecosystem in which the individual tolerates dysfunctional behaviors for fear of abandonment or loneliness (Guermazi et al., 2024).

Evidence indicates that irrational beliefs associated with the inability to live without the presence of the loved one constitute a central indicator of low self-esteem. Therefore, these beliefs generate tolerance to situations of mistreatment or abuse, which are rationalized or justified by the victims as a necessary means to maintain the relationship (Sirois et al., 2023). In this context, if violence is perceived as a tool that guarantees the continuity of the bond, both the aggressor and the victim can normalize it within the couple's interaction; in addition, the fear of loneliness, understood as an experience of existential emptiness or uselessness in the face of abandonment, reinforces permanence in abusive relationships, intensifying the cycle of violence (Ma et al., 2022; Niazov et al., 2022).

However, the perspective of emotional dependence has limitations by avoiding historical and contextual aspects that contribute to the development of this dependence and its interaction with violence and self-esteem, so it does not sufficiently address how personal history, attachment experiences, and previous relational dynamics shape patterns of emotional dependence (Pérez-Martínez & Rodríguez-Fernández, 2024a). Likewise, it tends to simplify the relationship between violence, emotional dependence and self-esteem, without exploring in depth how these variables influence and feedback on each other (Denegri et al., 2022).

From a complementary perspective, emotional dependence can be seen as both a cause and an effect of family violence. On the one hand, as it is a maladaptive pattern, emotional dependence limits the victims' ability to make assertive decisions, perpetuating violent communication patterns within the family environment (Díaz Burgos & Ávila Granda, 2024; Mañas Viejo & Molines Alcaráz, 2024). On the other hand, violence can also strengthen emotional dependence, by employing emotional manipulation strategies such as devaluation, isolation and blackmail, which seek to weaken autonomy and reinforce

the aggressor's control. These tactics generate a power imbalance normalizes unequal roles and further deteriorates the victim's self-esteem (de la Villa Moral et al., 2017; Garrido Antón et al., 2020).

Low self-esteem, for its part, acts as a predisposing factor for emotional dependence and as a maintaining effect of violence. In this way, aggressors often exploit this vulnerability through control tactics that deepen the victim's personal insecurity, undermining their capacity for agency and reinforcing their submission within the relationship (Falconi Verona, 2023; Gómez Lamont et al., 2024). In this sense, both emotional dependence and low self-esteem fuel a cycle of violence in which the victim feels trapped, perceiving few alternatives to leaving the relationship (Aguirre Quiroz et al., 2024; Mañas Viejo & Molines Alcaráz, 2024).

3.3 Autonomy perspective

Another category that has recently been reviewed in the field of social and psychological sciences is the one that addresses intimate partner violence from perspective of autonomy, also known as "self-centered" approaches (Denegri et al., 2022). Along these lines, the relevance of personal self-esteem stands out, defined as the level of self-esteem a person has about themselves, which constitutes a key input for decision-making in different aspects of life (Aguirre Quiroz et al., 2024; Chuñe Suclupe et al., 2024).

This places factors such as self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-respect at the center of its analysis, which are closely linked to self-care standards and the preservation of the sense of self (Martínez Bocanegra, 2024). From this perspective, emotional dependence is understood as a deficit in these fundamental capacities, expressed in a low level of self-care or self-efficacy that has developed over time, as a result of accumulated patterns or experiences (Paltán Bonilla, 2019).

The main strength of this perspective lies in its ability to integrate the individual's historical experiences and link them to their current behavior; therefore, it postulates that both emotional dependence and low autonomy or diminished self-esteem can be traced back to patterns of behavior learned in the family environment of origin or in significant experiences during adolescence in secondary socialization groups (Matamoros et al., 2024; Vargas Anguisaca & Gaibor Gonzalez, 2024). For example, a family that excessively restricts the autonomy of its members, limiting their ability to make decisions, can encourage development of excessive self-criticism in the individual. This type of self-criticism not only erodes the ego's defense mechanisms, but also makes it difficult to recognize personal achievements, fostering a feeling of worthlessness or low self-worth. In turn, this dynamic generates an inability to set limits in the face of abusive behavior, which can be observed first in the family environment and then reproduced in subsequent romantic relationships (Tamayo-Escobar & Blair-Gómez, 2024).

Evidence shows that, although personal autonomy and its historical components can be explanatory factors for both low self-esteem and emotional dependence, their impact is particularly noticeable in contexts of intimate partner violence (Pérez-Aranda & Estrada-Carmona, 2024; Vargas Anguisaca & Gaibor Gonzalez, 2024). This is especially observed in situations where abused people receive external assistance to strengthen their ties with their family of origin or through institutional support.

In this sense, the autonomy perspective shows a relevant theoretical and epistemological potential to explain how emotional dependence and self-esteem are articulated within violent dynamics (Cárdenas Llamosas, 2015). Emotional dependence and low self-esteem, being sustained by historical factors that have contributed to their perpetuation, are integrated into the current violent dynamic, causing the victim to question their own value while remaining trapped in patterns of subordination.

Personal self-esteem, understood as the assessment that an individual makes of themselves based on their capabilities, dignity and intrinsic value, becomes a central element in this dynamic. In couple contexts, self-esteem can act as a predisposing factor to justify abusive behavior. People with low self-esteem tend to develop irrational beliefs, such as the idea that they are not worthy of a healthy relationship or that they will not be able to find a partner who values them. These irrational beliefs predispose them to remain in dysfunctional relationships, reproducing patterns of violence learned in the family environment of origin and extrapolating them to current relationships.

On the other hand, from the perspective of autonomy, emotional dependence is defined as the need for constant validation by an external figure, which leads the individual to develop a negative perception of their own value by externalizing their locus of control. In other words, the person depends on external agents to validate their sense of identity, which further weakens their ability to make independent

decisions or develop a positive perception of themselves (Pérez-Martínez & Rodríguez-Fernández, 2024b; Vargas Anguisaca & Gaibor Gonzalez, 2024).

In the context of couples, this dependence manifests itself as a subordination towards the aggressor, which translates into the justification and rationalization of their violent behaviors. This rationalization not only reinforces the bond of emotional dependence, but is also perceived as favorable for the victim, considering that such behaviors contribute to their identity or to the maintenance of the relationship (Contreras Cuzcano, 2020).

This perspective on interaction between self-esteem and intimate partner violence can be understood as a set of patterns of dependency that aim to reinforce the aggressor's position of power. This is achieved, in part, by rationalizing abusive behaviors, which are reinterpreted by victim as attempts to improve or adapt within the relationship. At the same time, the aggressor contributes to this dynamic by exercising violence in various forms, such as devaluation, isolation, and emotional control. In the most extreme cases, this is complemented by physical aggression, profoundly affecting victim's self-perception.

This dynamic causes significant alterations in three interrelated aspects of victim: the depolarization of their autonomy, the distortion of their identity, and tolerance of abuse. The depolarization of autonomy implies a progressive loss of the capacity to make independent decisions. Identity distortion affects fundamental elements such as the perception of dignity, the sense of merit and intrinsic worth, while tolerance of abuse manifests itself as a progressive acceptance of abusive behaviors, which are eventually justified or rationalized by victim (Gonzales Ruiz et al., 2023; Pérez-Aranda & Estrada-Carmona, 2024). Regarding the interaction between emotional dependence and self-esteem, the literature indicates that these factors are intrinsically linked and maintain a reciprocal relationship. Emotional dependence can be, at the same time, a cause and consequence of weakened self-esteem. When the victim feels that their personal value depends exclusively on external validation, particularly from the figure of the aggressor, their vulnerability to emotional manipulation increases significantly (Mamani-Benito et al., 2023). An example of this is the use of emotional blackmail strategies, such as guilt-based manipulation, which reinforce the victim's perception that they are not capable of functioning outside the relationship. This is accompanied by control over their identity, limiting their ability to develop a sense of autonomy and independence. In this context, the victim's self-esteem is determined almost exclusively by the fulfillment of the aggressor's expectations (Tapullima-Mori et al., 2023).

It is important to note that these patterns of dependence and tolerance of violence do not arise in isolation, but may have roots in the victim's family environment of origin. In many cases, the absence of limits against abusive or aggressive behavior during childhood contributes to normalization of violence, which is later replicated in adult relationships. However, this perspective can extend beyond the family environment. Various studies emphasize that cultural and social influences also influence configuration of self-esteem based on emotional dependence.

For example, gender expectations imposed during childhood and adolescence, as well as cultural roles that reinforce submission and passivity in women, are determining factors (Denegri et al., 2022). In this way, patterns of violence are not only perpetuated within the family nucleus, but are also influenced by broader sociocultural norms. These influences include the mediatization of violence, the normalization of abusive patterns, microaggressions, and a general decrease in the perception of responsibility for the aggressor. These factors amplify the vulnerability of victims and reinforce dynamics of emotional dependence that perpetuate the cycle of violence (Roa Saborit et al., 2024).

3.4 Sociocultural perspective

A perspective that, although not more integrative than of personal autonomy, is that of family culture and beliefs, also understood as a sociocultural perspective. This view considers family violence, including violence in intimate relationships, can be interpreted as the result of attitudinal patterns and norms of coexistence learned within the families of origin, both of aggressor and the victim. In this sense, this category proposes a deeper analysis of the family and interpersonal history of members of the dysfunctional dyad, seeking to trace the origin of their behaviors and beliefs (Barrantes Báez, 2024).

However, this perspective has not been consolidated as the main category to analyze the interaction between emotional dependence, self-esteem and family violence, since it requires relying on other complementary categories to fully explain the violent dynamics. One of the key aspects to consider in

this analysis is parenting styles, which influence the configuration of beliefs and attitudes towards violence (Cárdenas Llamosas, 2015). Overly authoritarian or neglectful parenting styles, for example, can instill the idea that violence is a valid means of resolving conflicts or maintaining order within the family group. On the other hand, overly permissive parenting styles can generate perception of an absence of authority or clear norms that regulate family dynamics, which also contributes to dysfunctionality in future relationships (Cisneros Zúñiga et al., 2024).

From a psychosocial perspective, beliefs linked to gender roles also exert a significant influence on the perpetuation of violence. Patriarchal or sexist ideologies, which assign men a predominant and authoritarian role within the relationship, can justify or even rationalize violence. Under these beliefs, men are seen as figures of authority and regulation, while women are relegated to a position of subordination and submission. Furthermore, family expectations about gender roles, such as the mandate of female submission, can serve as mechanisms for maintaining gender-based violence within the relationship (Chuñe Suclupe et al., 2024; Denegri et al., 2022).

Likewise, the social naturalization of violence and normalization of abusive patterns as acceptable forms of family interaction contribute to dysfunctional relationships perpetuating violent dynamics. In these contexts, violence is not only tolerated, but is assumed to be a legitimate means of resolving conflicts or imposing norms within the family (Pérez Rodríguez, 2024).

However, although this perspective offers valuable tools for understanding why violence can be learned, normalized, or justified within certain family and sociocultural contexts, it has significant limitations. In particular, it tends to lose sight of elements of judgment for understanding the phenomenon, such as the personal history of each individual, their personal autonomy, and the specific dynamics of the violent relationship. Therefore, although it provides depth to the analysis of certain structural and cultural factors, it is not sufficient to capture multidimensional complexity of violence in intimate relationships.

DISCUSSION

The systematic review shows perspective of personal autonomy is the one that best explains the phenomenon of intimate partner violence in relation to emotional dependence and low self-esteem, placing at the center of analysis factors such as self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-respect, which are fundamental for decision-making and preserving the sense of self (Aguirre Quiroz et al., 2024; Chuñe Suclupe et al., 2024). Emotional dependence is understood as a deficit in these essential capacities, manifesting in a low level of self-care and self-efficacy, developed over time due to patterns of behavior learned in family environment of origin or significant experiences during adolescence (Martínez Bocanegra, 2024; Matamoros et al., 2024).

This approach allows the historical experiences of the individual to be integrated and linked to their current behavior, highlighting how emotional dependence and low self-esteem can be traced back to early socialization experiences and restrictive parenting styles. The autonomy perspective also offers a robust theoretical framework to understand how low self-esteem and emotional dependence not only predispose victims to remain in violent relationships, but are also reinforced by the emotional manipulation of the aggressor, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence (Paltán Bonilla, 2019; Denegri et al., 2022).

Furthermore, this perspective highlights that self-confidence and self-efficacy are vital for victims to be able to recognize and value their own capabilities, which is crucial to breaking the cycle of violence. Emotional dependence, seen as a lack of these skills, makes victims more susceptible to manipulation by the aggressor, who can take advantage of their low self-esteem to maintain control and domination. This dynamic reinforces the perception of helplessness in victims, preventing them from seeing alternatives to their current situation and making it difficult to make autonomous decisions allow them to leave the violent relationship.

The strength of this perspective lies in its ability to explain the multidimensional complexity of IPV, considering both personal and contextual factors that contribute to the perpetuation of patterns of dependency and low self-esteem in victims. By focusing the analysis on personal autonomy, the importance of strengthening self-confidence and self-efficacy in victims is underlined as key strategies for intervention and prevention of IPV. This not only helps victims recognize their worth and capabilities,

but also provides them with the necessary tools to make healthier and more constructive decisions regarding their relationships and personal well-being (Falconi Verona, 2023; Gómez Lamont et al., 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the systematic review shows that emotional dependence and low self-esteem are both predictors and consequences of intimate partner violence. Dysfunctional family dynamics, restrictive parenting styles, and sociocultural norms are factors that influence the perpetuation of these patterns, affecting the self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-respect of victims. In this regard, the perspective of personal autonomy is shown to be the most effective in explaining the phenomenon, since it integrates the individual's historical experiences and links them to their current behavior. Additionally, the theoretical perspective outlined shows how the aggressor's emotional manipulation reinforces emotional dependence and low self-esteem, thus perpetuating the cycle of violence.

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